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CLAIMS

1. A method of inviting an assistant entity into an existing communication session established by a service system with an associated transport mechanism for the exchange of data across a network between endpoint entities joined to the session; wherein:
- (a) - a first endpoint entity already joined to the session and constituted by a party having an endpoint system connected to the network, sends a request to the service system requesting the presence of an assistant entity in the session, the request directly or indirectly indicating the identity of the existing session;
- (b) - the service system selects an appropriate assistant entity from a group of assistant entities taking account of context data concerning the existing session, and joins the selected assistant entity to the session.
2. A method according to claim 1, wherein the assistant entity is a customer service representative and associated endpoint system.
3. A method according to claim 1, wherein the assistant entity is a software-based entity with an associated knowledge base.
4. A method according to claim 1, wherein the data network is the internet, and the existing session has multiple parties connected to it through web browser functionality of associated endpoint systems, the service system providing follow-me page-push functionality to the party endpoint systems whereby to enable co-browsing by the parties joined to the session.
5. A method according to claim 4, wherein the context of the existing communication session comprises the subject of a web page currently being jointly browsed by the parties joined to the session service.
6. A method according to claim 1, wherein in step (a) the first party uses an active feature of a web page served by the service system to request that a assistant entity join the session.

7. A method according to any one of the preceding claims, wherein the service system, in setting up a communication session, creates a service-session functional entity which in the course of joining a said endpoint entity to the session, sends connection details of the transport mechanism associated with the communication session to the endpoint entity or its proxy, that endpoint entity or its proxy then using the connection details to connect itself to the transport mechanism.

8. A method according to claim 7, wherein the service-session functional entity comprises a session instance with generic behaviour for adding and removing endpoint entities to the communication session and for recording the endpoint entities currently joined to the communication session, and an associated service instance with service-specific behaviour determining when the session instance is to add and remove endpoint entities.

9. A method according to any one of claims 1 to 6, wherein the service system, in setting up a communication session, creates a service-session functional entity that comprises a session instance with generic behaviour for adding and removing endpoint entities to the communication session and for recording the endpoint entities currently joined to the communication session, and an associated service instance with service-specific behaviour determining when the session instance is to add and remove endpoint entities.

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10. A method according to any one of the preceding claims, wherein the transport mechanism associated with a communication session provides multiple data transfer channels, for different media types, between endpoint entities joined to the communication session.

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11. A method according to claim 10, wherein the endpoint entities include web browser functionality and the service system provides functionality, and the transport mechanism provides channels, for at least two of the following:

- text chat ;
- follow-me page-push;
- packetized voice.

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12. A method according to claim 7, wherein the transport mechanism associated with a communication session provides multiple data transfer channels, for different media types, between endpoint entities joined to the communication session, the connection details passed to a said endpoint entity or its proxy comprising details of the media channels associated with the communication session, and the endpoint entity or its proxy using these details to establish corresponding media channel connections to the transport mechanism.
13. A method according to claim 7, wherein the state of connection of a said endpoint entity to the transport mechanism is signalled to the session-service functional entity by leg messages passed between a leg controller of the endpoint entity or its proxy and a corresponding leg controller of the service-session functional entity.
14. A method according to claim 7, wherein the second endpoint entity or its proxy already has connection functionality for joining and participating in a communication session, the service-session functional entity of the communication session to which the endpoint entity is to be joined inviting this entity into the session by sending said connection details to the connection functionality of the entity or its proxy.
15. A method according to claim 7, wherein the service-session functional entity, in joining the first endpoint entity into the communication session, sends the latter both connection functionality for joining and participating in a communication session, and said connection details.
16. A method according to claim 15, wherein the connection details and functionality are sent in association with a web page served by the service system.
17. A service system comprising
- a session entity for establishing communication sessions and controlling the joining of endpoint entities to each such session;
 - a transport entity for establishing a transport mechanism for each session established by the session entity, the transport mechanism allowing the exchange of data across a network between endpoint entities joined to the session;

- request-reception means operative to receive a request from a first endpoint entity already joined to a session and constituted by a party having an endpoint system connected to the network, the request serving to request the presence of an assistant entity in the session and directly or indirectly indicating the identity of the existing communication session; and
- assistant-selection means responsive to the receipt of a said request by the request-reception means to select an appropriate assistant entity from a group of possible assistant entities taking account of the context of the existing communication session, the assistant-selection means being operative to cause the session entity to join the selected assistant entity to the session.

18. A service system according to claim 17, wherein the assistant entity is a customer service representative and associated endpoint system.

- 15 19. A service system according to claim 17, wherein the assistant entity is a software-based entity with an associated knowledge base.

- 20 20. A service system according to claim 17, wherein the network is the Internet and the service system providing follow-me page-push functionality to the party endpoint systems whereby to enable co-browsing by the parties joined to the session.